

ASHINGTON TOWN COUNCIL, DRAFT Minutes of the Full Council Meeting held at 6:00pm on Tuesday 26th November 2024, at Ashington Town Hall, Council Chamber, 65 Station Road, Ashington, NE63 8RX

CLLRS PRESENT:

Cllrs. Mark Purvis (Chair), Louis Brown, Marjorie Chambers, Matthew Cuthbert, Lynne Grimshaw, Gemma Hemsley, Graeme Wright, Jim Lang, Sophie Robinson (joined the meeting at 18:24), Pauline Thompson, and John Tully.

ALSO, IN ATTENDANCE

Sarah Eden – Executive Officer/RFO, Stephen Humphrey – Assets & Development Manager, Gary Holmes – Administration Assistant (Minute taking)

FC24/069 WELCOME BY THE CHAIR

Welcome by Cllr Mark Purvis.

FC24/070 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs. Victor Bridges, Cllr Paul Wright, Cllr Glynn Davies and Cllr Bob Walkinshaw.

FC24/071 DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS

Cllr Louis Brown disclosed an interest as an allotment holder, and site representative.

FC24/072 DISPENSATIONS

Cllr Louis Brown requested as dispensation due to being part of the allotments.

FC24/073 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

There were 14 members of the public present, and Inspector Wayne Daniels from the neighbourhood policing team present.

In response to the previous minutes of the Finance and General Services committee, a member of the public requested clarification regarding the characterisation of the allotment holders' attendance at the meeting. The public representative emphasised that the allotment holders did not intend to make Cllrs feel intimidated but rather sought to communicate their concerns and show a united front that felt strongly.

Cllr Mark Purvis acknowledged the concerns shared and clarified that the minutes reflected the reasoning behind the meeting and decision being included in the risk assessment, noting that the unexpected large turnout of attendees had resulted in an overcrowded and potentially unsafe environment, but there was no suggestion in the minutes that any member of the public has personally intimidated Cllrs.

FC24/074 MINUTES OF LAST MEETING

It was **AGREED to RECEIVE and SIGN** as a true record, the minutes of the Full Council meeting held on Tuesday 24th September 2024.

FC24/075 REPORT FROM THE NEIGHBOURHOOD POLICING TEAM

The following report from Inspector Wayne Daniels was **RECEIVED**.

General Overview

Demand wise this year has been consistent month on month between 800 – 900 incidents each month.

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ASB again fairly consistent but obviously rises throughout the summer and is dropping off but on average between 80-90 ASB jobs per month.

Neighbourhood Priorities

ASB

In most cases we have seen reductions in ASB month on month in comparison to last year. Motorcycle disorder, which was significant last year has reduced for example, in Aug 2023 we had 56 reports but this August only 16. Credit to the OP Capiro Team who are regularly in the area, targeting offenders and have uplifted a number of vehicles. We also carry out a lot of call backs which has increased our community intelligence. Throughout the summer holidays we didn't see an increase in ASB until the last week of the school holidays. Likewise for Halloween and bonfire night. – example of good working with Asset watch and Community Safety Team to deal with a number of youths who came into the Town Centre to cause disorder. Using the CCTV, we were able to identify a number of the youths which resulted in home visits being carried out and ASB warning letters issued.

ASB Week

Last week there was a lot of partnership activity going in in Northumberland with some engagement and raising awareness.

Retail Crime

Theft is one of our highest reported crime types which literally goes up and down depending on when people are in and out of prison. With regards to my teams specifically we have the responsibility to target our most prolific shoplifters and those who threaten violence. We have dealt with 253 shoplifting crimes and have a positive outcome rate of 84%. To put that into perspective our top 10 offenders for the Ashington sector have committed 246 crimes between them this year. Shoplifting is a real challenge for us, in particular early releases from prison and we find them re-offending quite quickly often because of the lack of support when they are released. We are currently working on an outreach group with partner agencies to reduce the risk of re-offending.

Drugs / Operation Stoke

Across the Ashington sector we have taken out 15 cannabis farms. Last week I ran Operation Stoke and executed 3 drugs warrants which led to 3 persons being arrested in concern in drug supply with a quantity and drugs and cash being recovered.

Asset Watch

The cameras have been a great investment and the set up they have is brilliant. I will ensure that any good news stories involving the CCTV cameras will be shared as and when I can. Consideration for investment in the future for crawler cameras so they can be moved around the town as and when needed.

Project Shield / Community Safety Team

Ashington is a Project Shield Area – extra investment from the PCC to tackle serious violence and ASB. Extra patrols and funding opportunities such as Op Stoke. Partnership working is the best it's been, we have fortnightly meetings with NCC, fire service, adolescent services and the VRU to share information and work together to tackle issues in the area. Example – summer holiday taskings.

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Community Safety Team – great working as highlighted during their presentation at last meeting.

Cllr Caroline Ball expressed her gratitude to Inspector Wayne Daniels for his report. She highlighted the upcoming session at the Pavilion in the new year, emphasising its potential to build stronger relationships and improve community rapport with the Police over time.

Cllr Marjorie Chambers also thanked Inspector Wayne Daniels, specifically acknowledging the Police's efforts and their assistance in addressing motorcycle-related issues in the Ashington area.

Cllr Graeme Wright praised the public engagement between the Police and the community, describing it as brilliant. He then inquired about potential ways the Council could provide future assistance. In response, Inspector Wayne Daniels requested support in encouraging anonymous reporting to the police.

FC24/076 REPORT FROM THE CIVIC HEAD OF ASHINGTON (CLLR CAROLINE BALL)

A verbal report from Civic Head Cllr Caroline Ball was **RECEIVED**.

Cllr Caroline Ball thanked Cllr Sophie Robinson for her appearances as Deputy Civic Head in her absence and listed all attendances as Civic Head of Ashington.

- **Saturday 7th September 2024** – Pride Picnic Opening Speech
- **Thursday 22nd August 2024** - Escape Family Support Family International Day, to open the event and present a grant cheque
- **Saturday 21st September 2024** - Northumberland County of Sanctuary International Day Grand Opening
- **Sunday 10th November 2024** – Remembrance Sunday
- **Friday 15th November 2024** - Ashington and District Male Voice Choir concert
- **Friday 22nd November 2024** – SENRUG Annual grant cheque presentation

Cllr Caroline Ball also thanked the Officers of Ashington Town Council for their hard work and thanked the community organisations around Ashington for their continued hard work.

FC24/077 AMENDED TERMS OF REFERENCE – PERSONNEL COMMITTEE

The amendment to the Personnel Committee Terms of Reference was **APPROVED**.

FC24/078 AMENDED TERMS OF REFERENCE – CLIMATE CHANGE AND ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

The amendment to the Climate Change and Environment (CCE) Committee Terms of Reference was **APPROVED**.

FC24/079 CLIMATE CHANGE & ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

The Draft report of the meeting held on 29th October 2024 was **RECEIVED**.

FC24/080 DRAFT RESERVES POLICY

In accordance with the Local Government Act 1972, and Governance and Accountability for Smaller Authorities in England, it was **AGREED** to **RECEIVE** a Draft Reserves Policy, and it was **AGREED** to adopt for this for Ashington Town Council.

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The Executive Officer introduced that the Reserves Policy presented to the Council provides a comprehensive framework for managing the town council's financial reserves, ensuring responsible and transparent financial stewardship. The policy outlines our approach to maintaining appropriate levels of general and earmarked reserves, balancing the need for financial prudence with effective resource management. By establishing clear guidelines for reserve levels, purposes, and annual review processes, this policy supports our commitment to maintaining financial resilience, enabling the council to respond to unexpected challenges, plan for future infrastructure needs, and ultimately serve the local community with fiscal responsibility.

FC24/081 PHASE 3 MEADOW VALE, ASHINGTON STREET NAMING CONSULTATION

Suggestions for street names for phase 3 (plots 266-425) were **RECEIVED**, and a response to NCC was **AGREED**.

Cllr Caroline Ball brought up a discussion regarding regional accents, specifically referencing the pronunciation of street names.

Cllr Marjorie Chambers noted that the current street name suggestions were all golf course themed. In response, Councillor Caroline Ball proposed using the names of female golfers as an alternative naming approach.

It was AGREED to present this suggestion to the street naming team at Northumberland County Council.

FC24/082 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

It was AGREED to pass a resolution to exclude the press and public from the meeting during consideration of the following items, permitted under Section 1 (2) LGA 1960, due to the confidential nature of the business being transacted.

Gary Holmes and Stephen Humphrey left the meeting.

FC24/083 PERSONNEL COMMITTEE

a) 24/25 Pay Deal and Salary Progression

It was AGREED to receive the draft report of the Personnel Committee meeting held on 12th November 2024, and to endorse those actions taken in accordance with the NJC Pay Deal, and backdated pay to April 2024.

It was also AGREED to endorse salary scale progression made in accordance with the progression of staff who are on the NJC salary scale within their respective scales and subject to automatic annual increments, effective from 1st April 2025. This included automatic progression for all staff (excluding the Executive Officer and Assets and Development Manager), as per their contracts of employment.

b) Salary Scale Progression (not automatic)

It was AGREED to receive the recommendation of the Personnel Committee in respect of the salary scale of the Assets and Development Manager, having previously been on a single point in the NJC salary scale.

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It was AGREED to approve the proposed salary scale for the Assets and Development Manager, effective 1st April 2025, with automatic annual increments, subject to satisfactory performance.

The Executive Officer left the meeting.

It was AGREED to receive the recommendation of the Personnel Committee in respect of the salary scale of the Executive Officer/RFO, having reached the maximum spinal point in the current range.

It was AGREED to approve the proposed salary scale for the Executive Officer/RFO, effective 1st April 2025, with automatic annual increments, subject to satisfactory performance. It was also endorsed that the Personnel Committee undertake a review with the Executive Officer in the New Year.

FC24/084 DATE, TIME AND VENUE FOR THE NEXT MEETING

Tuesday 28th January 2025, 6:00pm at the Town Hall

The meeting ended at 8:01pm.